



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement in Reply to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Mr. Vartan Oskanian, by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 2, 2006

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to note that I'm speaking on behalf of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, and on their behalf I would like to welcome the presentation of Minister Oskanian to the Permanent Council.

The Minsk Group Co-Chairs, as always, wish to fulfill faithfully the charge given to them by the OSCE to reduce the risk of renewed hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and bring forward a negotiated peace. Indeed, over the past two years, with the active cooperation of the Presidents and Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan and their staffs, the Co-Chairs have seen very serious progress in this direction. The Co-Chairs recall their numerous meetings with the Foreign Ministers, as well as the meetings of the two Presidents in Astana, Warsaw, Kazan, and, most recently, Rambouillet.

It is not merely the desire of the Co-Chairs and the OSCE that makes the present moment important in the negotiations. The objective conditions of the timeline of events in the region compel our attention and intensive activity. 2006 offers a realistic window of opportunity for a negotiated agreement. By 2007 and 2008, parliamentary and presidential elections in both countries will limit the possibilities for progress. The Co-Chairs are mindful that negotiating the details of an agreement, making preparations for peacekeeping arrangements, and organizing international support for post-conflict reconstruction are essential tasks that will require months of concentrated activity. These efforts, however, can scarcely begin without the unambiguous agreement of the Presidents on the core elements of an agreement.

To preserve the confidentiality of their negotiations, the Co-Chairs will not mention the details of the agreement under discussion. However, in this body they would wish to describe the outcomes such an agreement will achieve. An agreement will:

- greatly reduce the danger of a new war in the region or accidental outbreak of hostilities,
- increase the measure of security for the peoples caught up in the conflict and for the citizens of the region more broadly,
- reduce the military forces facing each other,
- open the door to demilitarization,
- permit the inhabitants to lead normal lives without fear and begin the return of displaced persons to their homes,

- provide major international assistance for reconstruction,
- start opening of transportation and communications links.

The Co-Chairs firmly believe that the outline of an agreement under discussion at Rambouillet supports all of these outcomes. The Co-Chairs believe that time is running short, and it is up to the two Presidents to act decisively in the weeks ahead to seize this opportunity for peace.

The Co-Chairs believe, nevertheless, that it will take months of more detailed negotiations to put together the full package of an agreement. We and our staffs are prepared to engage, and we know we can count on the support of the Minsk Group and the Chairman-in-Office and his staff. Yet, we must have the core elements in place soon if the presidents are to fulfill the trust their nations have placed in them.

The Co-Chairs reiterate: we believe the two sides are close to an agreement and are ready to further work in this direction, if there is a clear political will from both sides. We welcome the readiness expressed by both Presidents in Rambouillet to continue with this process. An agreement is by no means assured, but the terms of the agreement on the table are equitable. They are realistic and would provide enormous benefits to each side. The Co-Chairs strongly recommend that Armenia and Azerbaijan join together to work intensively to bridge the final remaining gaps. The Co-Chairs themselves would be ready to answer all possible questions at the Permanent Council in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.